THE LIONIZING OF NEW YORK

By A STRANGER IN TOWN

Misfortune may come to any city, but lions are its own fault.

The stranger in New York wonders why the invasion of lions. Brownstone lions rampant, Carrara marble lions couchant, plaster of paris lions passant and wooden lions waving their tails behind them dot the little island of Manhattan from the Battery to The Bronx. They congregate in plaza and park; they infest the habitations of the multi-millionaire; they seek out the dwellings of the lowly and lie down beside their doors. They have penetrated Harlem, and found a retreat before brownstone palaces of the West Side.

It is literally true. You cannot drift into any region, near or remote, where you can escape the heraldic lion, which is in close competition with the Jersey mosquito in proving that he is at home in any place or clime. Try walking along a crosstown street, and see how often you stub your toes over the neatly folded front paws of some stony monster. Enter a department store, Mr. Leo and his mate meet you sooner than does the aisle manager. Hunt for a friend's apartment, and you walk into the jaws of a smirking lion couchant. Try to find relief on the Riverside Drive. It can't be done. They romp along the driveway in elephantine kittenishness.

Something in Heraldry.

In what heraldic authorities term the "passant regardant" pose they glance coyly back at their tails and at you as you leave your favorite chop house. They stretch out luxuriantly at the entrance to the Public Library; they sit up in rakish recklessness before the dwellings of the plutocratic.

You think you can escape them, and you seek the side-street quiet of a tea garden.

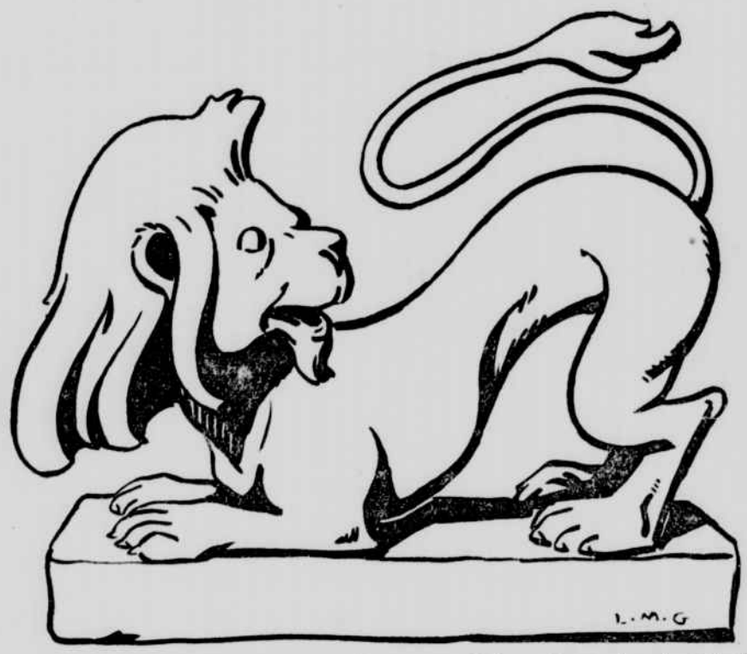
"Won't you have tea in our pergola?" the Domestic Science Graduate proprietor inquires, leading you into a three-by-four back yard, and handing you the "Balanced Ration Menu."

You slink into a wicker chair, and think you are safe, BUT—there they are again, sitting up in Satanic glee, chewing a marble rag, their teeth gleaming in the afternoon sun.

"Oh, yes," she says airily, as your stare betrays your horror, for the things have begun to get your nerve. "Just some trifles I picked up along the Riviera, a pair of Flemish lions. Very good, don't you think? Their expression is so naïve. They are supposed to have come from the Castle Castelli.

"Cream or lemon, did you say? Our chocolate eclairs are delicious this afternoon, or do you prefer a meringue?"

Regardless of fitness or unfitness, New York must have its lions. To quote the poet again, "They rear their fronted paws in air," and they rear them abnormally, and with great éclat before cheap flats and apartment houses. No matter how purely Manhattanese the architecture, how free from foreign touch, how innocent of Old World embellishment, the lion of St. Mark's and all the members of his family and his near and far relatives and his descendants are thought to be appropriate adornments.



One of These, on Either Side of the Entrance, Makes Your Apartment Worth More Money.

Sometimes these lions are awake and sometimes they are asleep; very often a paw or a tail is missing. Sometimes an aristocratic nose has sniffed the air so long that it has curled into a mere semblance of its former self. It matters not. The lion is there, and that is all New York seems to ask of him—that he be part of its compositeness.

The European war has paralyzed our foreign trade. It has thrown us on our own resources. The supply of food, clothing, commodities, has been cut off. We may perish for lack of German delicatessen; we may languish for Schweitzer cheese; the supply of red herring may never be replenished, and unbleached muslin may become the national garb until the secret of the German dyes is discovered, but the supply of lions has never diminished.

How do they get here? No one seems to know. Ask a Fifth Avenue curio dealer, and he shakes his head solemnly and mysteriously.

"America has wakened to the value of the lion in architecture, to its social possibilities, to the distinction that it lends to large and small gatherings," he will tell you. "The country has roused from its lethargy and has begun to realize that no home, however elaborate or however modest, is complete without at least one lion. And what America wants it gets. Just now New York is demanding lions and they are being imported. How? I cannot say—that would be telling one of the secrets of the trade. Many you see are spurious articles, gross imitations; others are genuine Carrara marble. Some are brought from the Riviera, where the lion flourishes; others come from Spain; old palaces on the other side are being denuded of lions that America may have them. The demand is so great that many dealers are going into the exclusive business of importing them."

Baffling as is the subject of lion supply and uncertain as is the origin of the present wave of lionizing, the matter has been take up by isolated statisticians, who have done some independent figuring, which will soon appear in the form of a series of tables in one of the coming numbers of "What Is Seen and Done in New York." These tables will prove with mathematical accuracy that at the present rate of increase in the lion supply every available space on the island of Manhattan that could possibly be occupied by a lion will have been preempted at the expiration of seven years, eleven months and seventeen says. This need not lead to undue haste on the part of those who are eager to secure these pets for their backyards and fire escapes. For the statistician holds out further hope.

He says that the municipality and public corporations may take a hand in the later spread of the leomania. He advises New Yorkers to be of good cheer. Entrances to subways and elevated stations, approaches to and exits from the tube—in fact, the whole area of underground and overhead Manhattan—may be devoted to the promotion of lion culture in the future. When these avenues of exploitation have been exhausted he suggests that posterity may take to the idea of mooring the creatures on rafts in the river and in the bay and thus have battalions of them to greet the coming and cheer the parting guest.

But, like everything else, it might have been worse and the bad taste germ might have affected its victims in another and more disastrous way. Consider the effect upon the population if this natural tendency to overdoing things had taken the form of using kew-pies or billikins as guardians of the hearth and home, the chophouse, the curio shop and the lobster palace!

The King of Stone Beasts.

A DISCUSSION OF HIGH-BROWISM

(By Courtesy of the New Republic)

NO one really wants to be considered a highbrow. The term itself, as Mr. Van Wyck Brooks says, is derogatory. Here and there a person may be so superior as to be flattered by the derision of the herd. Undergraduates like to think they are. But a man has to be far gone in superiority before he relishes the notion of being avoided for its sake. You cannot imagine a man like Nietzsche trying to prove he had a heart, any more than you can imagine him shooting the chutes at Coney Island. He is the kind of Olympian whose dignity seems to have been inherent. You would just as soon drink beer out of porcelain as slap a Nietzsche on the back.

But the ordinary Olympian, certainly in America, is more anxious to show he is gregarious than to protect his reputation for superiority and intellect. You do not have to slap him on the back, he slaps you. If he is running for office, in particular, he wants it to be known that blood, not ice water, flows through his veins. He yearns to indicate that he is a Good Fellow. He tells funny stories, has himself photographed playing pinochle, is discovered by his interviewer sitting at the organ singing "Home, Sweet Home." A man may have the temperament of a hermit crab in private life; in public life he must smile cheerily when a boilermaker crushes his fingers and bellows: "Tommy, put it there." There are not many people, in truth, who desire to skewer you with indignity to see how well done your heart is. But it is bound to happen in an American campaign if people suspect that the candidate is lofty or impractical or cold.

The word "highbrow" has no consistent meaning. Highbrow music means classic music, so-called difficult music, while a highbrow politician means a difficult politician mainly in the sense that he will not always play the game. A highbrow in general, to quote Mr. Brooks's "America's Coming-of-Age," is undoubtedly "the superior person whose virtue is admitted but felt to be an inept, unpalatable virtue, while the 'Lowbrow' is a good fellow one readily takes to, but with a certain scorn for him and all his works." But what makes the highbrow's virtue inept and unpalatable? That is where the problem lies.

The difficulty is not with virtue itself. A man may be of the sort that neither drinks nor smokes nor chews nor swears; he may be of the sort that loves books and wears spectacles and yet not be a highbrow. Mr. Roosevelt is a case in point. What saves him from being a highbrow is, to put it scientifically, his guts. What makes it hard to accept the highbrow is not the spotlessness of his conduct but the deficiency of his sympathy. He manages all the more easily to be superior because he never risks his neck. He may be deferential, but he has no intellectual humility. He is arrogant inside. In "The Gods Are Athirst" Anatole France has depicted a monstrous highbrow, and Henry James has shown one in his fastidious Osmond. The frigidity of such men, their chilly indifference, combined with a high sensibility, distinguishes them. In Lincoln's Cabinet there were such patronizing men, and one remembers Walter Bagehot's echoing tone: "The notion of employing a man of unknown smallness at a crisis of unknown greatness is to our minds simply ludicrous. Mr. Lincoln, it is true, happened to be a man, if not of eminent ability, yet of eminent justness. There was an inner depth of Puritan nature which came out under suffering and was very attractive. But success in a lottery is no argument for lotteries. What were the chances against a person of Lincoln's antecedents, elected as he was, proving to be what he was?" This is the way a highbrow talks.

The coldness of the highbrow is not simply a matter of popular prejudice. It is a matter of psychology, a matter of fact. "Where long familiarity with a certain class of effects, even æsthetic ones, has blunted mere emotional excitability as much as it has sharpened taste and judgment," says William James in the second volume of his Psychology, "we do get the intellectual emotion, if such it can be called, pure and undefiled. And the dryness of it, the paleness, the absence of all glow, as it may exist in a thoroughly expert critic's mind, not only shows us what an altogether different thing it is from the 'coarser' emotions we considered first, but makes us suspect that almost the entire difference lies in the fact that the bodily sounding-board, vibrating in the one case, is in the other mute. 'Not so very bad' is, in a person of consummate taste, apt to be the highest limit of approving expression. '*Rien ne me choque*' is said to have been Chopin's superlative of praise of new music.

"A sentimental layman would feel, and ought to feel, horrified, on being admitted into such critic's mind, to see how cold, how thin, how void of human significance, are the motives for favor or disfavor that there prevail. The capacity to make a nice spot on the wall will outweigh a picture's whole content; a foolish trick of words will preserve a poem; an utterly meaningless fitness of sequence in one musical composition sets at naught any amount of 'expressiveness' in another.

"I remember seeing an English couple sit for more than an hour on a piercing February day in the Academy at Venice before the celebrated 'Assumption' by Titian; and when I after being chased from room to room by the cold, concluded to get into the sunshine as fast as possible and let the pictures go, but before leaving drew reverently near to them to learn with what superior forms of susceptibility they might be endowed, all I overheard was the woman's voice murmuring: 'What a *deprecatory* expression her face wears! What self-abne*gation!* How *unworthy* she feels of the honor she is receiving!' Their honest hearts had been kept warm all the time by a glow of spurious sentiment that would have fairly made old Titian sick. Mr. Ruskin somewhere makes the (for him terrible) admission that religious people as a rule care little for pictures, and that when they do care for them they generally prefer the worst ones to the best.

"Yes! in every art, in every science, there is the keen perception of certain relations being *right* or not, and there is the emotional flush and thrill consequent thereupon. And these are two things, not one. In the former of them it is that experts and masters are at home. The latter accompaniments are bodily commotions that they may hardly feel, but that may be experienced in their fulness by *cretins* and philistines in whom the critical judgment is at its lowest ebb. The 'marvels' of science, about which so much edifying popular literature is written, are apt to be 'caviare' to the men in the laboratories. And even divine philosophy itself, which common mortals consider so 'sublime' an occupation, on account of the vastness of its data and outlook, is too apt to the practical philosopher himself to be but a sharpening and tightening business, a matter of 'points' of screwing down things, of splitting hairs, and of the 'intent' rather than the 'extent' of conceptions. Very little emotion here!—except the effort of setting the attention fine, and the feeling of ease and relief (mainly in the breathing apparatus) when the inconsistencies are overcome and the thoughts run smoothly for a while."

The fate of the highbrow William James exemplifies by a confession: "No matter how emotional the temperament may be, if the imagination be poor the occasions for touching off the emotional trains will fail to be realized, and the life will be *pro tanto* cold and dry. This is perhaps a reason why it may be better that a man of thought should not have too strong a visualizing power. He is less likely to have his trains of meditation disturbed by emotional interruptions. It will be remembered that Mr. Galton found the members of the Royal Society and of the French Academy of Sciences to be below par in visualizing power. If I may speak of myself, I am far less able to visualize now, at the age of forty-six, than in my earlier years; and I am strongly inclined to believe that the relative sluggishness of my emotional life at present is quite as much connected with this fact as it is with the invading torpor of hoary eld, or with the omnibus-horse routine of settled professional and domestic life. I say this because I occasionally have a flash of the old stronger visual imagery, and I notice that the emotional commentary, so to call it, is then liable to become much more acute than is its present wont."

The life of the highbrow, if we are to judge by William James, does not provide the conditions necessary and sufficient for "an abundant emotional life." In that fact alone there is something to substantiate the popular antipathy to the highbrow.

The coolness of the highbrow he defends. "The oftener we meet an object the more definitely we think and behave about it, and the less is the organic perturbation to which it gives rise. The first time we saw it we perhaps could neither act nor think at all, and had no reaction but organic perturbation. The emotions of startled surprise, wonder or curiosity were the result. Now we look at it with absolutely no emotion. This tendency to economy in the nerve paths through which our sensations and ideas discharge is the basis of all growth in efficiency, readiness and skill. Where would the general, the surgeon, the presiding chairman be if their nerve currents kept running down into their viscera instead of keeping up amid their convolutions? But what they gain for practice by this law they lose, it must be confessed, for feeling. For the world-worn and experienced man, the sense of pleasure which he gets from the free and powerful flow of thoughts, overcoming obstacles as they arise, is the only compensation for that freshness of heart which he once enjoyed."

Emotions Interpreted; or Art Made Easy

—The Meeting of Dante and Beatrice